What happens to Jesus in the Talmud?

AI Overview

In the Talmud, Jesus (Yeshu the Nazarene) was described as a sorcerer who practiced magic and led Israel astray, resulting in his execution on the eve of Passover. A passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a) states he was hanged after a 40-day period where no one came forward to defend him, as he was considered an enticer into apostasy. Later Talmudic passages contain a story where a necromancer (Onkelos) raises Jesus from the dead to ask about his fate in the afterlife, and Jesus is said to be punished by being boiled in excrement for opposing the sages.

The Execution Narrative

Crime: Jesus was accused of practicing sorcery and leading the people of Israel astray into apostasy.

Process: A public announcement was made for 40 days, inviting anyone to provide a defense for Jesus.

Outcome: No defense was presented, and he was hanged on the eve of Passover.

The Afterlife Narrative

The Story: In the Talmudic tractate Gittin 57a, a scholar named Onkelos (often identified as Onkelos the Convert) practices necromancy to raise historical figures, including Jesus.

Jesus's Fate: When asked about his punishment in the afterlife, Jesus's ashes are described as being gathered daily, burned, and scattered into the sea, a punishment for his opposition to the Jewish sages.

Purpose and Context

Jewish Perspective: The Talmudic references to Jesus are not intended to describe his life or teachings but rather to present a Jewish viewpoint on a historical figure considered a threat to Jewish law and practice.

Rivalry with Christianity: The passages are interpreted as part of the intellectual and theological rivalry between Judaism and early Christianity, with the stories serving to discredit

In the Talmud, Jesus (Yeshu ha-Notzri) is portrayed very differently from how he appears in the New Testament. He is depicted as a false teacher who practiced sorcery, enticed

Israel into apostasy, and was executed for it. Some passages also describe his punishment in the afterlife, illustrating rabbinic hostility toward the rise of Christianity.

Execution Narrative

- **Charge:** He is accused of sorcery and leading Israel astray.
- **Trial Process:** Sanhedrin 43a records that a herald went out for 40 days announcing that Yeshu would be stoned, inviting anyone to defend him, but no one came forward.
- **Outcome:** He was ultimately "hanged on the eve of Passover," which many scholars interpret as crucifixion.

Afterlife Fate

- In **Gittin 57a**, a story tells of Onkelos, a convert to Judaism, who summons various figures through necromancy.
- When he raises Jesus, Jesus reports that his punishment in the afterlife is to be **burned in boiling excrement**, a symbolic statement about his having mocked the words of the sages.

Additional Rabbinic Mentions

- Other scattered references describe Jesus as having disciples (five are sometimes listed by name).
- Several allusions depict him learning improper teachings in Egypt and misleading others through magic.
- These passages are polemical in nature, written during periods of Christian expansion when rabbis sought to discredit the new movement.

Context

- The Talmud’s accounts are **not biographies** but **polemical responses** to Christianity, framed from a rabbinic Jewish perspective.
- The texts reflect Jewish-Christian rivalry in Late Antiquity. To the rabbis, Jesus was not the Messiah, but a cautionary figure who misled his followers.

Would you like me to give you a **direct outline of every Talmud passage where Jesus is mentioned**, with the exact tractate names and summaries?

Yes

Here is a direct outline of the main Talmudic passages that mention (or are understood by most scholars to refer to) Jesus, called *Yeshu ha-Notzri*. These passages are scattered, brief, and polemical, not continuous narratives.

Sanhedrin 43a – Execution of Yeshu

- Records that *Yeshu the Nazarene* was tried for sorcery and leading Israel astray.
- For 40 days, a herald announced his upcoming stoning, inviting defense.
- None came forward, so he was executed ("hanged on the eve of Passover").

Sanhedrin 107b / Sotah 47a – Student Who Went Astray

- Mentions a disciple from the Second Temple era who misused texts and practices of magic, understood by later commentators as Yeshu.
- Connects him with controversy over improper teachings and misconduct.

Berakhot 17b

- Refers obliquely to apostates and sectarians (minim). Some medieval commentators link this to early Christians and Yeshu.

Gittin 57a – Afterlife Punishment

- Onkelos the convert summons Yeshu via necromancy.
- When asked about his status in the afterlife, Yeshu reports being punished by being **immersed in boiling excrement**.
- This is framed as his fate for mocking the sages.

Sanhedrin 103a / Berakhot 10a

- Contains veiled references to “sinners of Israel” who lead the people astray. Some identify these passages with early mentions of Yeshu and his disciples.

Tosefta Hullin 2:23 (parallels in b. Sanhedrin)

- References a man named Yeshu who practiced magic, cut incisions in his flesh, and led people astray. Early polemical link to Jesus.

Sanhedrin 43a (elsewhere) – Disciples of Yeshu

- Lists five disciples of Yeshu: Mattai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni, and Todah.
- Each disciple is brought up for judgment with biblical verses cited in condemnation and defense.

Summary Perspective

- **Charges:** Magic/sorcery, apostasy, and misleading Israel.
- **Fate:** Execution before Passover; condemned in the afterlife.
- **Message:** Rabbinic texts do not retell Jesus's ministry but use his figure as a polemical warning against false messianic claimants and Christian teaching.

Would you like me to create a **table summarizing each passage, with tractate name, content, and historical/rabbinic interpretation**, so you have a clear at-a-glance reference?

Yes

Here is a table that summarizes the main Talmudic references to Jesus (*Yeshu ha-Notzri*) with tractate, content, and interpretation:

Tractate / Source	Content Summary	Rabbinic / Historical Interpretation

Sanhedrin 43a	Yeshu accused of sorcery and leading Israel astray. A herald announces his upcoming punishment for 40 days; no defense comes forward. He is executed ("hanged on the eve of Passover").	Viewed as a polemical alternative to the Gospel crucifixion story. "Hanged" is interpreted as crucifixion. The 40-day call for defense emphasizes fairness despite his guilt.
Sanhedrin 43a (disciples)	Names five disciples of Yeshu: Mattai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni, and Todah. Each is judged and condemned through scriptural wordplay.	A satirical judicial account, showing Jesus's followers as guilty of the same apostasy. Possibly parodying the expansion of early Christianity.
Sanhedrin 107b / Sotah 47a	Mentions a student who "went astray," learning and misusing magic, seducing people. Later commentators link this to Yeshu.	Allegorical reference to Jesus as a corrupt disciple who rejected rabbinic teaching, favoring foreign/occult knowledge.
Berakhot 17b	Discusses "apostates and informers" (minim) not inheriting the world to come. Some medieval commentaries apply this to Christians and Yeshu.	Early rabbinic dismissal of Christians as sectarian heretics excluded from salvation.
Gittin 57a	Story of Onkelos the Convert summoning Yeshu via necromancy. Jesus says his punishment is to be immersed in boiling excrement for mocking the sages.	A sharp polemical statement against Jesus's authority and teachings, portraying him as humiliated in the afterlife.
Sanhedrin 103a / Berakhot 10a	Mentions wicked kings and "sinners in Israel" who lead people astray. Some commentators say this alludes indirectly to Yeshu.	Interpreted as a veiled critique of Jesus's role in creating false worship.
Tosefta Hullin 2:23	Refers to Yeshu performing magic, cutting his flesh (a forbidden act), and misleading Israel.	Parallel accusation to Sanhedrin: emphasizes sorcery and false teachings as his defining crimes.

Would you like me to also include **how Christian polemicists and later Jewish commentators (like Rashi, Maimonides, and medieval disputations) interpreted these passages** for historical completeness?